

**[Erie Canal]**

[Not?] FOLKLORE

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Title Erie canal songs Tom Kilboy

Place of origin West Troy, N.Y. Date 12/22/'38

Project worker R. P. Gray

Project editor

Remarks 8118

Folklore

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### FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER R. P. Gray

ADDRESS 119 State [?]. Albany

DATE Dec. 22, 1938

SUBJECT Folklore: Erie Canal Songs

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Tom Kilroy 2307 Broadway, [West?] Troy.

1. Ancestry Irish
2. Place and date of birth West Troy Dec. 8, 1958
3. Family Son and daughter, both married. He lives with daughter.
4. Places lived in, with dates West Troy. [Transiant?] at Cresent.
5. Education, with dates Brothers school in W. Troy until 8 yrs. Brother struck him side of face for chewing gum; never went back to school. Seems to have [?] resentment [?] his life.
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates
7. Special skills and interests Driving mules and horses on [canal?]; Singing and drinking
8. Community and religious activities [?] known for singing and good [?]

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9. Description of informant Stocky, e. 5:5 ft.; failing eyesight, wears glasses; very deaf. Strong voice, evidently once good singer.

10. Other points gained in interview A bit husky after singing; asked for drink to warm his throat. His father owned many horses and mules and made a business of hauling the canal boats. His son worked with him from boyhood,

Tom Kilboy

Tom Kilboy is well known in Crescent as one of the few surviving singers of the Erie Canal days. He stands out, like Galusha in the Adirondacks, a folk singer very rare and hard to find. I first learned about him in Crescent though no one could give me his present address. Only after days of persistent searching in Crescent, Cohoes, Troy and finally through the help of the Police and Department of Health in Watervliet he was located in a respectable, though cheap, apartment on Broadway, in West Troy. There was no response to my knocking. A man in the lower apartment informed me that Tom was very deaf, so accompanied by this neighbor I ventured to open the door. Through an inner glass door I could see an aged man all alone, standing and fussing with something on a table. He was neatly dressed, somewhat bald and wore glasses. I bawled out my errand into his ear. Immediately he flushed, and with arms extended sideways he sang "Fifteen Years on the Erie Canal". He did not hesitate for a word; his voice, though husky was strong and musical. The thrill of pleasure was evident enough.

He was in his 81st year, he told me, and had spent his life driving mules and horses for his father on the Erie Canal since he was 12 years old. His chief delight and amusement had been singing the old songs. He was the daily minstrel on boats, on the tow path/ and in the inns along the canal, though he plays no musical instrument. His [fommal?] education ended when he was 8 years old. He had 2 attended the Brothers School in West Troy until the day a Brother caught him chewing gum and struck him on the face. He never returned and seems even now to feel the smart of that reprimand.

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He also sang a song of his own composing "I'm Flix O'Grady", with prideful emphasis on the line, "There goes Kilboy, the handsome young man."

After an hour he was weary and husky and needed a drink.

He will be glad to sing more songs and have them recorded.